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of

## December 15 - December 29, 1988

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# News Releases

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Information

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## BACTERIUM PRODUCES A SUGAR NEVER BEFORE FOUND IN NATURE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19—A bacterium in the digestive tract of some animals makes a sugar that until now was not known to occur in nature, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist reports.

“Up to now, this sugar—L-altrose—has been known only as a chemical synthesized in laboratories,” says Robert J. Stack, a biochemist with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service in Peoria, Ill.

Stack discovered, however, that the *Butyrivibrio fibrisolvens* bacterium makes L-altrose as part of a polysaccharide, a long chain of chemically linked sugar molecules. The bacterium is one of many species in the rumen—the first of four stomachs in animals such as cattle, sheep and goats. The bacteria digest the animals’ feed for them.

Industry is looking into L-altrose as a noncaloric sweetener, but producing it chemically is expensive, he says. As for bacterial L-altrose, an inexpensive way to recover it from bacterial cultures is needed. Use of any L-altrose in food would require Food and Drug Administration approval.

Stack is with a team studying ruminal bacteria at the agency’s Northern Regional Research Center. Their main goal is finding out how ruminal bacteria break down the complex carbohydrates in plant materials. Stack hopes, for example, to learn why the bacteria make polysaccharides and what role the polysaccharides play in digesting plants.

But, he adds, “in finding out the properties of these polysaccharides, we may even turn up some industrial applications for them. We have just signed a cooperative agreement with a private firm to work with us on that.” Bacterial polysaccharides, he points out, are widely used to make textiles, adhesives, paper, paint, pharmaceuticals, detergents, food and cosmetics and to recover oil from low-producing wells.

Stack’s discovery came during two years of analyzing about 50 polysaccharides made by three different species of ruminal bacteria. He says the research is one example of USDA’s new biotechnology-oriented approach to long-term agricultural problems and opportunities.



He has applied for a patent on his bacterial process of making L-altrose and calls the fibrisolvens bacterium “one of the most important of the hundreds of bacterial species that live in the rumen.”

“Ruminal bacteria,” he says, “are rather poorly understood despite the fact that we wouldn’t have meat, cheese, ice cream, wool, cashmere and many other products without them.

“Some bacteria seem to be better at digesting grasses or other forages, while others do best with grains such as corn. Someday we hope to be able to match selected or genetically engineered bacteria to specific animal diets. That could improve animal nutrition while making animal production more efficient.”

Stack points out that cattle generally digest only about 70 to 80 percent of the starch in corn. “If we can increase this just a few percentage points by manipulating the ruminal bacteria, we could lower costs for both the farmer and consumer,” he says.

The “L” in L-altrose stands for “left-handed,” he explains. Most common sugars in our diets are right-handed—such as table sugar, which contains equal amounts of right-handed glucose and right-handed fructose.

“Although both leftand right-handed sugars taste sweet, the enzymes in our digestive tract can’t recognize the structure of the lefties,” he says. “So our bodies don’t break them down to make calories.

“It’s like a right-handed baseball player trying to wear a left-hander’s mitt. Hand and glove just won’t match up.”

Linda Cooke (309) 685-4011

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## **CRP TOTAL ACRES REACHES 28.1 MILLION; EIGHTH SIGNUP SET**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the enrollment of an additional 2,604,901 acres into the 10-year Conservation Reserve Program.

The acreage was approved from bids submitted on 3,434,646 acres during the seventh signup held July 18-Aug. 31 and brings the total under CRP contracts to 28,130,290 acres, said Vern Neppel, acting executive vice president of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation

Annual rental payments in the bids accepted averaged \$49.71 per acre; average for the first six signups was \$48.38.

Neppl said the eighth CRP signup is scheduled for Feb. 6-24, 1989.

The CRP is designed to remove highly erodible and environmentally sensitive cropland from production. In addition to the annual rental payments, owners and operators of qualifying acreage receive cost-share assistance for the establishment of a vegetative cover on their enrolled acreage.

More information on the eighth CRP signup will be announced later.

Detailed state-by-state CRP enrollment information follows:

	TOTAL CONTRACTED ACRES	SEVENTH SIGNUP CONTRACTED ACRES	SEVENTH SIGNUP TREE ACRES	SEVENTH SIGNUP FILTER STRIP ACRES
US	28,130,290	2,604,901	173,612	13,531
AL	469,429	34,266	19,549	125
AK	24,701	327	0	0
AZ	0	0	0	0
AR	174,490	18,817	11,640	156
CA	170,479	12,906	0	0
CO	1,748,117	73,795	1	0
CT	10	10	10	0
DE	724	272	5	0
FL	105,157	12,799	12,092	1
GA	570,801	59,064	53,509	154
HI	85	0	0	0
ID	714,307	46,057	31	4
IL	464,768	68,815	1,859	750
IN	259,700	44,152	1,001	1,045
IA	1,635,516	140,891	865	612
KS	2,385,453	157,745	42	230
KY	383,504	24,580	20	266
LA	87,809	9,297	4,221	10
ME	32,221	5,069	519	1
MD	9,688	2,597	99	725
MA	25	0	0	0
MI	152,752	24,090	1,400	257
MN	1,644,159	113,162	3,434	255
MS	583,445	40,123	26,866	565

MO	1,381,896	78,627	348	732
MT	2,264,770	282,253	0	0
NE	1,159,688	101,743	138	123
NV	2,343	895	0	0
NH	0	0	0	0
NJ	364	0	0	0
NM	468,309	9,255	0	0
NY	47,174	6,857	216	32
NC	115,999	11,625	7,428	24
ND	2,175,123	413,361	204	86
OH	179,950	31,183	1,120	268
OK	1,017,301	74,132	38	22
OR	497,622	8,179	19	14
PA	71,205	12,572	181	25
PR	380	140	0	0
RI	0	0	0	0
SC	227,289	20,817	15,356	1,700
SD	1,222,860	229,802	171	187
TN	379,468	30,004	1,294	4,244
TX	3,457,007	299,395	1,505	24
UT	227,359	8,785	0	0
VT	187	3	0	0
VA	58,518	8,835	3,243	292
WA	870,230	27,627	129	0
WV	553	55	5	0
WI	464,749	51,867	5,054	601
WY	222,606	8,055	0	0

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-6787

Phil Villa-Lobos (202) 447-4026

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## USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 9.55 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 8.80 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 8.74 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 4.77 cents per pound.

Minimum loan repayment rates for 1987 crop loans are the higher of the world price or 50 percent of the loan rate. For 1988 crop rice, the minimum repayment rates are the higher of the world price or 60 percent of the loan rate.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$5.90 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$5.51 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.27 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3:00 P.M. EDT. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Dec. 27 at 3:00 P.M. EDT, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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## DROP IN IRON CAN SLOW WOMAN'S WORKOUT

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—Having trouble keeping up with Jane Fonda? Maybe it's the amount of iron that you store in the body.

Women who show signs of iron deficiency, but are not anemic, used less oxygen during workouts, according to a study by a U.S. Department of Agriculture researcher. Also, the women accumulated considerably more lactate.

As a result, the exercising caused that familiar lead-in-the-legs feeling.

“Women with low iron stores had less energy available during exercise and tired faster,” said Henry C. Lukaski, a physiologist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. He is at the agency's Grand Forks, N.D. Human Nutrition Research Center.

As the women's iron reserves decreased, so did their ability to burn calories. "This reduces their potential energy output," he said, noting it might also increase their chance of gaining weight.

Lukaski ran a variety of tests on 11 women in their late 20's before and after consuming a low-iron diet for nearly three months. Blood samples showed that an indicator of stored iron—ferritin levels—dropped dramatically in these women. Indicators for anemia—hemoglobin and hematocrit—dipped only slightly, remaining in the low normal range.

Earlier this year, he reported that these women had trouble maintaining body temperature after consuming the low-iron diet, which could explain why many women complain of being cold.

According to USDA statistics, the average intake of iron from food for premenopausal women was little more than half the Recommended Dietary Allowance in 1985. Almost four-fifths of the women surveyed get less than 70 percent of the RDA for iron through their diet.

In this study, Lukaski said, iron deficiency changed the body's fuel preference during the exercise—a gradually increasing workout on a stationary cycle used to assess fitness. The women burned mostly carbohydrates—thereby increasing the accumulation of lactate—instead of burning the normal mix of carbohydrate and fat.

This wasn't surprising because it takes more oxygen to burn fat, he explained, and some of the enzymes needed for this process are iron-dependent.

Lukaski said two other research groups have seen the same changes in trained athletes after their iron stores dropped.

Judy McBride (301) 344-4095

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## MYERS NAMES COTTON BOARD MEMBERS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Peter C. Myers has appointed six members and seven alternate members to the Cotton Board, which administers a national cotton research and promotion program.

Named, by state, are:

Arizona—Wilbur H. Wuertz, Casa Grande; alternate, Larry W. Jarnagin, Litchfield Park;

Arkansas—William A. Baxter, Watson (reappointed); alternate, Ross D. Hughes, Jr., Blytheville (reappointed);

Georgia—C. Lynn Newman, Cochran (reappointed); alternate, S. Louie Perry, Jr., Moultrie (reappointed);

Mississippi—Richard B. Flowers, Tunica (reappointed); alternate, Richard C. Shaw, Sidon; Anderson, Raymondville (reappointed); Billy H. DeBusk, Anson; alternate, Cliett A. Lowman III, Bishop; alternate, Keith Streety, Levelland.

Under regulations of the 1966 Cotton Research and Promotion Act, which authorizes the board, producer membership on the board reflects cotton production in the cotton-producing states. Because Texas cotton production over the past five years increased sufficiently to merit an additional board member representing the state, Myers appointed DeBusk, who is a current alternate, to board membership and appointed Lowman as his alternate. Streety will complete DeBusk's term as alternate.

The appointees will serve for terms ending Dec. 31, 1991, except for the unexpired alternate term, which ends a year earlier. The Cotton Board is composed of 20 producer-members and their alternates, plus one public member who serves without an alternate. Board members serve staggered three-year terms.

Designed to advance the position of cotton in the marketplace, the research and promotion program is funded by assessments on producers and is carried out by Cotton Incorporated under contract with the Cotton Board. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service monitors the Cotton Board for the Secretary of Agriculture and reviews its budget, plans, and projects to see that it is operated according to law and in the public interest.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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## USDA ANNOUNCES OCEAN SHIPPING WORKSHOP

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Transportation and Florida Citrus Mutual, an association of 15,000 Florida fruit and citrus growers, will conduct a joint workshop on current ocean shipping issues and the Shipping Act of 1984 at the Sheraton Hotel in Lakeland, Fla., on Feb. 9.

The purpose of the workshop is to inform agricultural exporters of current developments in the Shipping Act review process, said OT Administrator Martin "Buzz" Fitzpatrick.

"Agricultural shippers and carriers will lead an open discussion of ocean shipping issues," he said, "including such areas as conference anti-trust immunity, service contracts, independent actions and freight tariff structure."

The Shipping Act, which affects ocean commerce, will be subject to review by a Congressional commission in 1989. OT is currently conducting a study of the law's impact on agricultural exporters.

In 1987, agricultural exporters shipped over \$14 billion worth of commodities on ocean liner vessels. Fitzpatrick said the workshop will allow agricultural exporters to voice their opinions about the Shipping Act and focus on solutions to current problems.

Featured speakers will include Pat Hanemann, vice president of Dole Citrus, Ontario, Calif.; Ron Gottshall, managing director, Trans-Pacific Westbound Rate Agreement, San Francisco; Ray Ebeling, vice president, Sea-Land Industries, Iselin, N.J.; and Don Lins, Seald-Sweet Growers in Tampa, Fla.

Any agricultural exporter or importer involved with ocean transport or interested in the Shipping Act review process is invited to attend. For more information contact Bobby McKown, Florida Citrus Mutual, Lakeland, Fla., telephone (813) 682-1111.

For information on the USDA/OT impact study, contact Jim Caron, OT, Washington, D.C., telephone (202) 653-6310.

Larry Mark (202) 447-3977

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## USDA REVISES SECTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL MEAT PURCHASE SPECIFICATIONS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23—Effective Jan. 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will add new fresh beef items to the Institutional Meat Purchase Specifications (IMPS) and expand the sampling plan tables that apply to those items.

The new fresh beef listings will be terms like “rib, regular” (the beef rib minus its “short plate”), “beef trimmings, trimmed” (virtually fat-free), “beef sandwich steaks, flaked, chopped, formed, wafer sliced—frozen” and “beef loin, bottom sirloin flap steak.”

These additions to the list of beef cuts respond to needs of institutional buyers of fresh beef, such as schools, hospitals, and the Department of Defense, said Paul M. Fuller of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service. Institutions will use lean trimmings for menu items such as pepper steak and steak sandwiches, and the other newly listed cuts for similarly increasingly popular dishes, he said.

IMPS include three sets of specifications. One, “General Requirements,” provides guidelines for refrigeration and packaging. A second set describes fresh beef, lamb, veal and calf, pork, cooked and cured beef, cured pork, variety meats, and sausage products. Each of the eight descriptions has a series number title—series 100, for example, covers fresh beef. The third IMPS set, “Quality Assurance Provisions,” is a guide for using samples to determine a product’s acceptability. Institutional buyers’ needs for uniform definitions of quality prompted construction of that guide, Fuller said.

So-called “sampling plan tables” in the quality assurance provisions will expand to apply to the new beef items. These tables spell out criteria such as the proportion of fat and bone a cut of a particular quality may have.

Added to the quality assurance provisions is a section on pork that corresponds with the IMPS descriptions for that meat.

The current IMPS revisions were developed in conjunction with trade organizations such as the National Association of Meat Purveyors and take into account comments from procurement and production segments of the beef and pork industries.

Initiatives to revise the IMPS came in 1980 from the food service industry, especially the military, which wanted a reliable standard to rely on for its large purchases. Because of limited resources, USDA decided



to revise the IMPS in order of their complexity, said Fuller. Because a beef carcass has the largest number of cuts of any meat institutions buy, USDA started revising the beef IMPS descriptions and their quality assurance provisions first. USDA completed the pork IMPS in August and intends to complete the veal and lamb IMPS descriptions and their quality assurance provisions in 1989.

Copies of the IMPS changes are available from Michael L. May, Chief, Standardization Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, Room 2649-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 447-4486.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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## **USDA IMPLEMENTS SANITATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANES USED TO EXPORT ANIMALS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it is expanding federal sanitation requirements to include airplanes used to carry animals for export.

“Until now, sanitation requirements covered only ships which were the principal carriers of export animals,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “Today, most animals, like people, travel abroad by air, and air travel should be addressed by the regulations. In fact, most airplanes already are disinfected before they are used to transport animals from the United States.”

Vehicles used to carry animals can become contaminated with disease organisms or flies, ticks, lice and mites that carry disease. Disease outbreaks among animals being carried for export could interfere with international marketing of U.S. livestock. The expanded rule covers aircraft, loading ramps, fittings and other equipment; all need to be cleaned and disinfected before animals are loaded, Glosser said.

The new requirements were published as a proposal in the Federal Register on Dec. 24, 1986. At the request of industry, the comment period was extended to Aug. 19, 1987.

Commenters raised four major concerns. First, they asked if shipments of pets and other small animals are included. They are not.

Second, they asked how the rules apply to airplanes taking animals aboard at two or more airports in the United States. APHIS ruled that a single cleaning at the first port suffices, unless other cargo loaded at succeeding ports brings in garbage, soil, manure, plant materials, insects or other materials presenting a disease hazard.

The third concern, raised by the Air Transport Association of America, questioned whether the required disinfecting agent, a four percent solution of sodium carbonate and .1 percent sodium silicate, might damage aircraft. Pan American World Airways and the Boeing Company tested the disinfectant and confirmed that the sodium silicate in the solution effectively inhibits the corrosive action of sodium carbonate on aluminum.

A fourth question asked was whether cleaning may be done after cargo other than animals comes aboard. APHIS said yes, provided that the cargo and the deck surface under it do not contain garbage, soil, manure, plant materials, insects or other materials presenting a disease hazard.

The final rule and clarifications of its impact are scheduled for publication in the Dec. 23 Federal Register. The rule takes effect on Jan. 23, 1989.

Max Heppner (301) 436-5222

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE FOR UPLAND COTTON**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-4.9) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Dec. 23, through 12:00 midnight Thursday, Dec. 29.

Since the AWP is less than the 1987-crop and 1988-crop base quality loan rates of 52.25 and 51.80 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate for 1987-crop and 1988-crop upland cotton during this period is equal to the AWP adjusted for the specific quality and location.

Because the loan repayment rate for 1988-crop upland cotton in effect during this period is less than the established loan rate, loan deficiency

payments will be paid to eligible producers who agree to forgo loan eligibility on their 1988-crop upland cotton. The payment rate for cotton sold during this period will equal the difference between the loan rate and the loan repayment rate.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Based on data for the week ending Dec. 22, the AWP for upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price	
Northern Europe Price .....	62.11
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location .....	10.67
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton .....	2.00
Average U.S. location .....	0.42
Sum of Adjustments .....	-13.09
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE .....	49.02 cents/lb.
Coarse Count Adjustment	
Northern Europe Price .....	62.11
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price .....	-57.05
	5.06
Adjustment to SLM 1-inch cotton .....	-4.15
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT .....	0.91 cents/lb.

The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made on Dec. 29.

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

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## USDA PROPOSES NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR COOKED, UNCURED MEAT PATTIES

WASHINGTON, Dec 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing specific processing and labeling requirements to assure the safety of fully cooked, partially cooked, and char-marked ground meat patties. The proposal will be open for public comments through Jan. 27.

“There has been increasing evidence over the past several years that food-borne pathogens survive in products that many consumers erroneously consider to be fully cooked, such as ‘Char-Broiled Beef Patties’ and ‘Pre-Browned Fresh Pork Sausage Patties’,” according to Dr. Lester M. Crawford, administrator of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

“As these types of convenience products continue to become more popular we must establish requirements to reduce the potential for foodborne illness.”

Recently, a strain of *Escherichia-coli* bacteria was linked to an outbreak of food poisoning which hospitalized six Minnesota school children with severe diarrhea and cramps. The Centers for Disease Control has determined that undercooked beef patties caused the illness, although the specific E. Coli strain (O157:H57) that infected the children has not been isolated from the patties.

The proposed rule would establish requirements for storage of raw ingredients, processing times and temperatures, handling to prevent contamination after processing, and labels that include cooking instructions for final preparation. For instance, partially cooked ground meat patties would bear the statement “Partially Cooked: For Safety, Cook Until Well Done (Internal Meat Temperature of 160 F).” The statement would appear next to the product name.

Notice of this proposal will appear in the Dec. 27 Federal Register. Interested persons should submit comments on the proposed regulation to: Policy Office, Attn: Linda Carey, Hearing Clerk, FSIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Susan Rehe (202) 447-9113

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## USDA PROPOSES TO STANDARDIZE DRUG-FREE CERTIFICATIONS FOR CALVES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today proposed adding language, including notification of criminal penalties, to certificates signed by producers of young calves stating their animals are free of drug residues at slaughter.

Lester M. Crawford, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said the proposed language would standardize the certificates, as recommended by USDA's Office of Inspector General, and would advise producers of the possibility of \$250,000 to \$500,000 in fines and other criminal penalties for willful falsification.

In 1985, FSIS instituted an intensified testing program for calves up to three weeks in age or 150 pounds in weight to detect violative levels of sulfonamides and antibiotics. Producers can voluntarily provide written certification that their animals have not been treated with sulfa or antibiotic drugs, or, if they have, that prescribed withdrawal periods on the drug labels have been followed. FSIS testing on certified calves is less intensive than on uncertified calves.

Willful falsification of the certificates is a felony, and may result in a fine of \$250,000 or more for an individual or \$500,000 or more for a corporation. Penalties may also include imprisonment for up to five years. Under the proposal, the certificates would include this information on penalties, along with standardized language for certifying that medications were not used or were withdrawn properly.

Under the proposed rule, the producer and all subsequent owners would certify that the calves are drug free in order for the certification to be valid. Currently, only producers certify animals. Any subsequent "certifier" would be required to attach a copy of any previous certification to the final certification presented with the calf at the time of slaughter. This information would assist FSIS in its efforts to trace all owners of the calf should a drug residue violation be found.

The proposed rule was published today in the Federal Register. Written comments will be accepted until Feb. 27, and may be submitted to: Linda Carey, Hearing Clerk, Room 3171-S, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Hedy Ohringer (202) 447-9113

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Thomas O. Kay today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 9.55 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 8.80 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 8.74 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 4.77 cents per pound.

Minimum loan repayment rates for 1987 crop loans are the higher of the world price or 50 percent of the loan rate. For 1988 crop rice, the minimum repayment rates are the higher of the world price or 60 percent of the loan rate.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$5.90 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$5.51 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.27 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3:00 P.M. EDT. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Jan. 3 at 3:00 P.M. EDT, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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## **USDA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON ENDING SCRAPIE PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended the comment period on a proposal to discontinue the Scrapie Eradication Program. Scrapie is a degenerative and fatal disease of sheep and goats.

“The intent and goals of the program are laudable, but it is questionable whether we have the technology or regulatory framework to effectively administer an eradication program at this time,” said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. “We have been asked by industry associations to extend the comment period for 60 days to provide adequate time for public

comments on the possibility of dismantling the program.”

A cooperative state-federal program began in 1952 to contain and ultimately eradicate scrapie, a disease of sheep and goats that attacks the central nervous system. The disease has an extremely long incubation period—18 to 42 months, and can be transmitted before clinical signs appear. Although there is no evidence that it poses a human health hazard, scrapie is nearly always fatal to infected animals.

Since federal eradication procedures are not mandated by law, the success of the program depends upon accurate reporting by flock owners.

Technology has produced neither a cure nor a diagnostic test for scrapie. Symptoms include debilitation, unsteady gait, and rubbing or scratching to relieve intense itching. Final confirmation of the disease requires an examination of brain tissues of deceased animals.

Without a cure for scrapie, animals reported as infected or exposed must be destroyed. Remaining animals in the flock are held under surveillance for 42 months. There is no diagnostic test for confirming the presence of the disease in a live animal.

Several animal health and industry groups have suggested that the scrapie eradication program has not been effective and should be discontinued.

In the Nov. 2 Federal Register, APHIS published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to discontinue the scrapie program and remove the regulations concerning animals destroyed because of scrapie. The comment period is being extended for 60 days to allow further comment.

Written comments must be postmarked or received on or before March 6, 1989. An original and two copies of written comments referring to Docket No. 88-131 should be sent to: USDA, APHIS, Regulatory Analysis and Development, Room 866, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Comments may be inspected in Room 1141 of USDA's South Building, 14th Street and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Marlene Stinson (301) 436-7255

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## USDA AMENDS IMPORTED BEEF AND PORK ASSESSMENT IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28—Effective Jan. 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will change the numbering system used to identify imported beef and pork assessed under two 1985 federal acts. The new system reflects changes made by the U.S. Customs Service, which collects the assessments.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the assessments on imported cattle, hogs, beef, beef products, pork, and pork products are currently identified with Tariff Schedule of the United States (TSUS) numbers. TSUS will be replaced on Jan. 1 with the Harmonized Tariff System (HTS). HTS continues TSUS beef and pork numbering categories, and adds four categories for previously unassessed edible beef offal, e.g., organ meats like livers and hearts.

For the Customs Service to continue collecting the assessments, the TSUS tables in regulations must be converted to HTS, Boyle said.

The assessments, which are authorized by the Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1985 and the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985, are added to those collected on domestic sales of cattle and hogs to fund the promotion and research orders for the beef and pork industries.

The revisions to current regulations will appear as an interim final rule in the Dec. 29 Federal Register. Beef and pork producers, importers, or others wishing to comment have until Jan. 30 to do so. Comments should be sent in duplicate to the Marketing Programs and Procurement Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, Rm. 2610-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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NO CHANGE IN THIS WEEK’S HONEY-LOAN REPAYMENT LEVELS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29—Producers may repay their 1987 and 1988 honey price-support loans at the following levels, according to Milton J. Hertz, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation:

Weekly Honey-loan repayment Levels, cents per pound, 1987 and 1988 crops

White.....	40.0
Extra-light amber .....	37.0
Light amber .....	36.0
Amber.....	34.0

The 1987-crop levels are unchanged from those announced Oct. 8; the 1988-crop levels are unchanged from those announced April 7.

Producers who redeem their honey pledged as loan collateral by repaying their 1987 and 1988 honey price-support loans at these levels may not repledge the same honey as collateral for another loan.

Jane K. Phillips (202) 447-7602 7:30 am-4:00 pm EST

John C. Ryan (202) 447-8207 4:00 pm-5:30 pm EST

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